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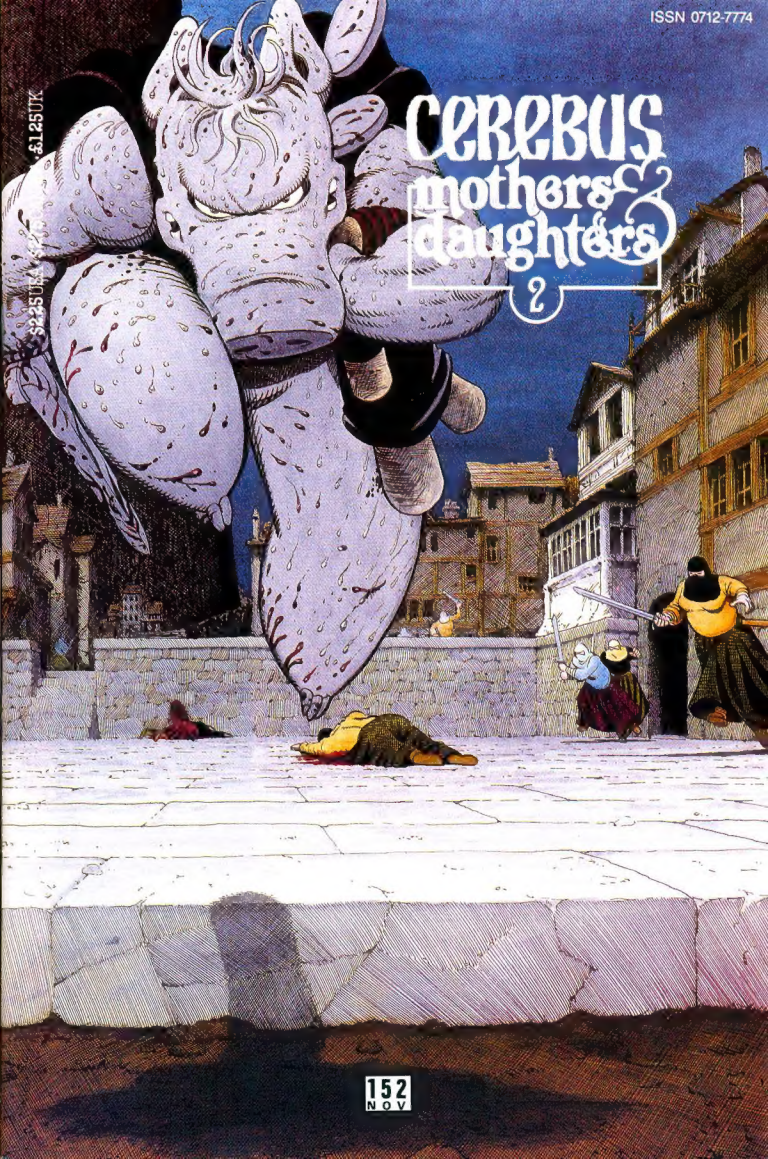
CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
2



152
NOV

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Whew. I've still got four pages left to do on this issue, but it *is* the final week of October so it is definitely time to be writing this Note.

★★★★★★★★★★

Just since we sent the back cover out to be separated, I had a chance to talk to Rory and Brian out in Berkeley and San Francisco and Rory said he would be happier with a Saturday appearance and Brian said he would be happier with a Friday night appearance, so those two dates should be reversed; Friday night at Comix Experience (5:30 to 7 p.m.) and Saturday afternoon at Comic Relief (2:30 to 4 p.m.). Gerhard will be at both signings and at the Sunday convention at the Golden Gateway Holiday Inn.

★★★★★★★★★★

Steve Bissette says he plans on hanging out a lot at several of the stops on the tour. Next year, Spiderbaby Grafix will be self-publishing a limited series called *Tyrant*, the dinosaur series that has been a number of years in the development stage, but which is now shifting into high gear. So far Albany looks like a good bet; we haven't got a date for the New York state capital, but Steve will be there.

★★★★★★★★★★

Steve Bolhafner is our man in St. Louis, helping us with publicity and such as well as putting us in contact with several stores down there. Tentatively, the sponsoring stores will be *Comic Headquarters* on Telegraph Road and *Fantasy Books II* on Gravois, part of the three store *Fantasy* chain. We hope to have these confirmed for next time.

★★★★★★★★★★

Larry Marder, who self-publishes the critically-acclaimed *Tales of the Beanworld* through Beanworld Press, has agreed to do a jam piece for auction to benefit the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund featuring Cerebus and the Beanworld characters. He's also a paid promotions consultant of Chicago's *Moondog's* comic book chain, so two of their stores will be sponsoring the tour in Chicago; *Moondog's* Lincoln Park and *Moondog's* Mt. Prospect.

★★★★★★★★★★

Annette Swanberg will be doing extensive media promotions in San Francisco and Los Angeles (thanks, Harlan, thanks Annette).

★★★★★★★★★★

Sponsoring store in Boston is Barbara Boatner's *Million Year Picnic;* they've ordered literally dozens of Comicshop Boxes over the last several years. The appearance there will be Saturday afternoon. I'll try and have the actual hours next time out.

★★★★★★★★★★

One of the purposes of the tour is to prove to myself and others that Cerebus is a very good seller if given the proper amount of exposure. Brian Hibbs ordered a box each of the reprint volumes; yes a box EACH of *Cerebus, High Society, Church & State* one, *Church & State* two and *Jaka's Story* with the idea in mind that they would last him through to Christmas, if not the start of the tour January 19. In two weeks he has sold three quarters of his order. What a crazy idea, eh? Three thousand pages of comics that make sense as a single story. It ain't holograms, it ain't gum cards and it ain't five different covers but, hey, it's just crazy enough that it might catch on!

★★★★★★★★★★

I'd like to thank Denis Kitchen for being very helpful when I called to let him know about the benefit auctions being planned for the various stops. Kitchen Sink Press is undoubtedly one of the "good guys" both in its treatment of creators and its commitment to publishing only quality material. I haven't had a chance to call Reed Waller (whom I've never met) but Denis thought we could count on him for a Cerebus/Omaha the Cat Dancer jam piece in Minneapolis. I think that would be great.

★★★★★★★★★★

Oh and Steve Bissette and I will do a Cerebus and Tyrant jam piece. I forgot to ask him, but I'm sure it's all right. Steve's about as close to being a member of the family as anyone gets.

★★★★★★★★★★

Thanks to Dave Katzman (Chicago), Charles Smith (indianapolis), Rantz Hoseley (the North west), Brian Coppola (Detroit) Dave Cercone (Washington), Bill Liebowitz (Los Angeles), Peter Grubbs (San Francisco), Keith deCandido (New York), David Anthony Kraft *(Comics Interview)*, Kim Thompson *(Amazing Heroes)*, Bill Schanes (Diamond), John Davis (Capital City) and everyone else helping out. Considering the first announcement of the tour hasn't even come out as of this date (October 28), I think we're off to a good start.

CEREBUS

NO. 152 NOVEMBER 1991

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

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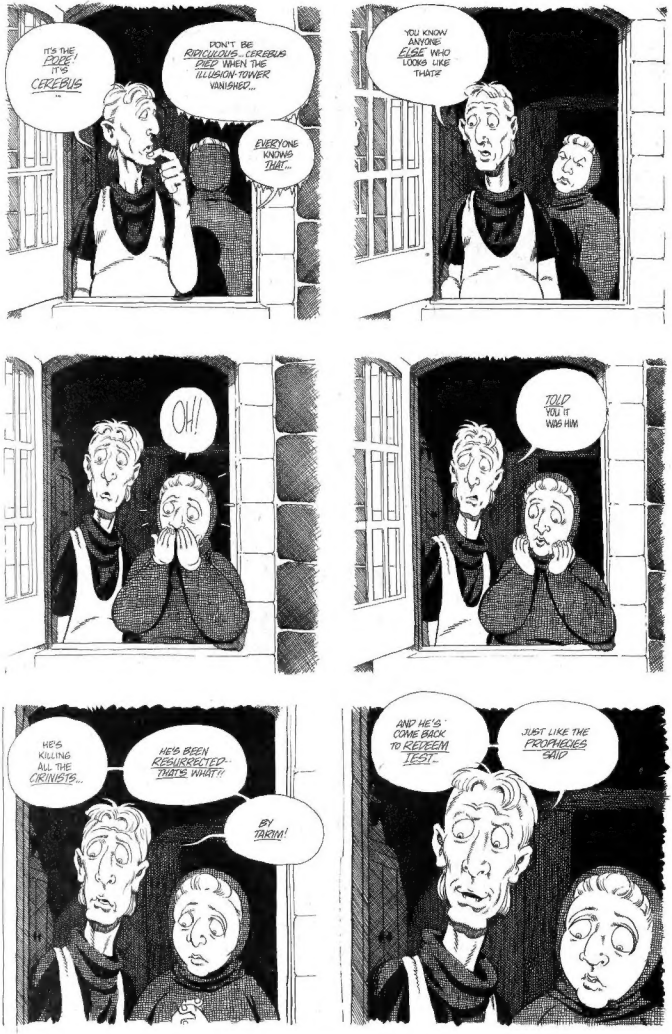
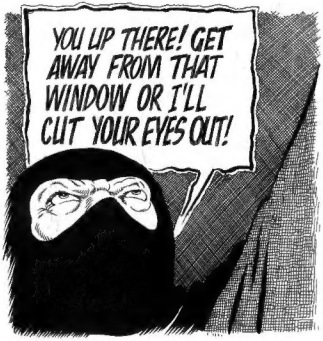

IT'S THE EXILE! IT'S CEREBUS ...
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS... CEREBUS DIED WHEN THE ILLUSION-TOWER VANISHED...
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT...
YOU KNOW ANYONE ELSE WHO LOOKS LIKE THAT?
OH!
TOLD YOU IT WAS HIM
HE'S KILLING ALL THE CIRINISTS...
HE'S BEEN RESURRECTED-- THAT'S WHAT?!
BY TARIN!
AND HE'S COME BACK TO REDEEM US!
JUST LIKE THE PROPHECIES SAID


YOU UP THERE! GET AWAY FROM THAT WINDOW OR I'LL CUT YOUR EYES OUT!

BETTER DO AS SHE...
YOU DON'T SCARE ME COW!

BRYAN!
CEREBUS HAS COME BACK TO REDEEM US!

HE'LL SORT YOU OUT!
BRYAN DON'T

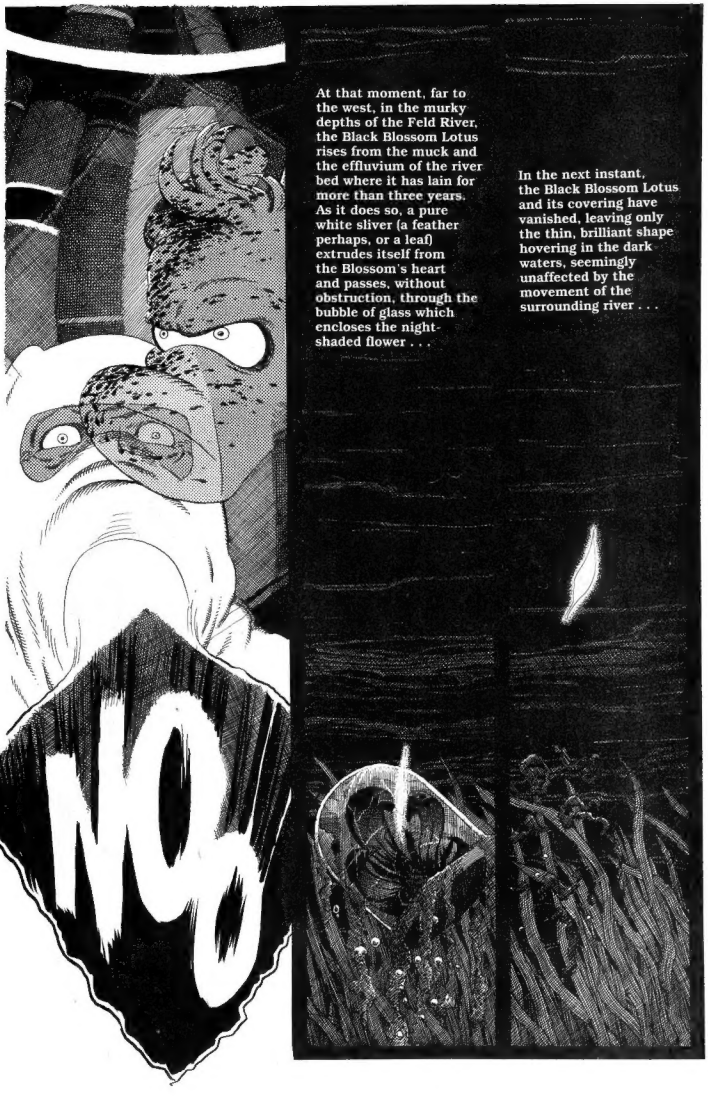
HAIL CEREBUS!!
BRYAN
YES
YES!

HAIL CEREBUS!!

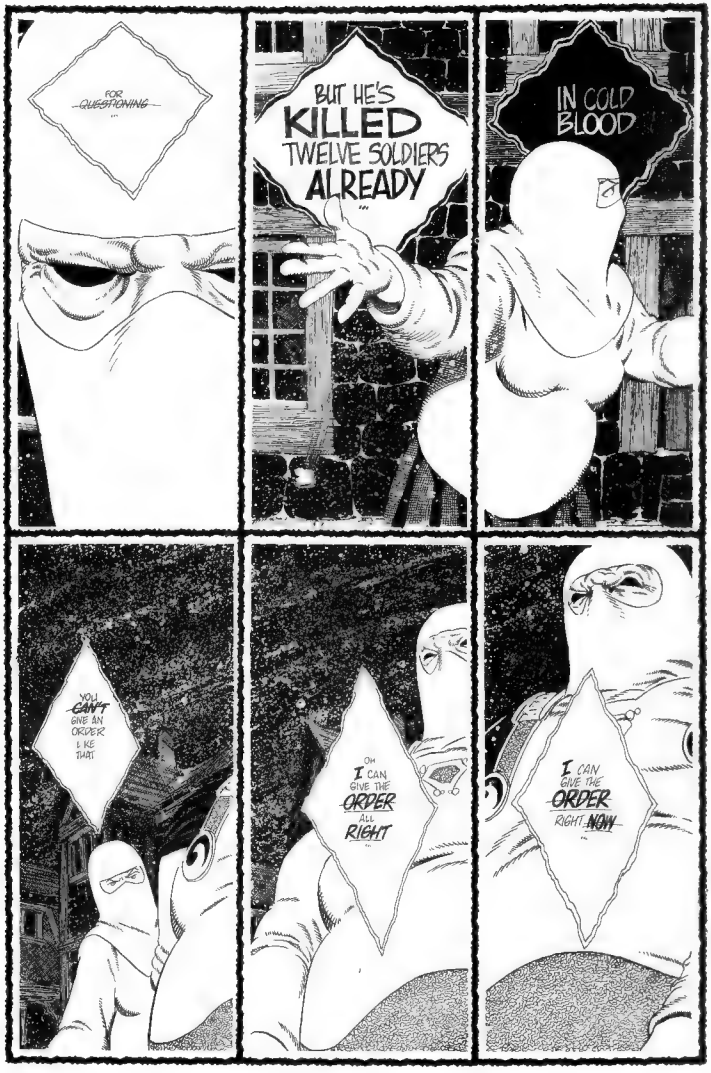
OF ALL THE...
CRIN
UNH!
THUMP
WHO?
WHO--?
WHO? IT'S NORMINA SWARTSKOF--THE ONE WHO CAPTURED THIS PENIS OF A TOWN FOR YOU

LOOK AT THIS MESS
YES, GENERAL
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU
JUST LOOK
I CAN ONLY HOPE — FOR YOUR SAKE — THAT THIS IS

LOOK AROUND
WHO...
WHO COULD HAVE DONE SUCH A...
YOU'LL SEE HIM
BUT WHO?!
HOW WILL I...
NO


NO!
At that moment, far to the west, in the murky depths of the Feld River, the Black Blossom Lotus rises from the muck and the effluvium of the river bed where it has lain for more than three years. As it does so, a pure white sliver (a feather perhaps, or a leaf) extrudes itself from the Blossom's heart and passes, without obstruction, through the bubble of glass which encloses the night-shaded flower . . .
In the next instant, the Black Blossom Lotus and its covering have vanished, leaving only the thin, brilliant shape hovering in the dark waters, seemingly unaffected by the movement of the surrounding river . . .

WHAT IS IT?
WHAT DID SHE SAY?
SHE DOESN'T WANT HIM HURT...
WHAT.
SHE DOESN'T WANT HIM HURT.
MY ORDERS ARE TO BRING HIM IN ALIVE...


FOR QUESTIONING
BUT HE'S KILLED TWELVE SOLDIERS ALREADY
IN COLD BLOOD
YOU CAN'T GIVE AN ORDER LIKE THAT
OH I CAN GIVE THE ORDER ALL RIGHT
I CAN GIVE THE ORDER RIGHT NOW

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Hi Dave.

Your response to my last letter was waiting for me when I returned from my two-week vacation in Europe. So, interestingly enough, I ended up reading your reply, which seemed to be suggesting I "go for it", on the very day I had just told my friend that I would *not* be moving to Lake Tahoe with her. I'm just too damned attracted to her, Dave. I had to tell her that being her room mate would definitely become very awkward for me. Of course, some small/large part of me was hoping she'd respond to this by revealing that she had unspoken feelings for me, too, but she merely said that she thought I had made the right decision.

So here I remain, stagnating on the East Coast.

Anyway, Europe was pretty cool. We tried to avoid all the big cities, which I'd already seen, and concentrate on smaller, out-of-the-way places. Now that I've tried traveling both alone and with someone, I'm not sure which way I prefer. I think it's nicer to be spontaneous on your own without worrying about what a companion wants to do, but at the same time it sucks if you can't turn to a friend and say "Shit, get a load of them Alps!"

Fine baked goods.

Sparkling beverage.

All right, so do you throw all the letters together randomly or is there some planning to it? Either way, in #147 I applaud you for putting Thomas Radigan directly after Tony Seybert's wonderful letter about the certain sort of bond that seems to exist within most of the *Cerebus* readership. It made Mr. Radigan's arguments come across as really laughable. How can anyone complain about paying for the book just because Aardvark Comment takes up so much space? I mean, the book will cost just the same whether there's one page of letters or twelve. The letters pages are really just more for your money if you enjoy them and care to take advantage of them. If you don't, fine. Just ignore them, and don't blame Dave, because he can only print whatever he's received to work with.

Dave, I've no doubt that someday you *will* return as a voice in Aardvark Comment. You were there for well over a hundred issues, and then you apparently changed your mind. Well, this book still has a long way to go, and I'm sure you'll eventually change your mind *again*.

Later,

Jon Nuquist
40 Ridgemont St.
Allston, MA
USA 02134

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I called her. Now we're back together. It's better than it was before, but it's still not perfect. Should I expect it to be perfect? I think I'm falling in love . . . but how do I know? Why is it so damned hard to communicate with people? I can't even communicate the difficulty I have communicating with people. I don't mind being alone, but when I decide to become close to someone I expect to be able to get through to them at least. That's all I really want.

There is a terrible pain in my gut, and I can't sleep and I haven't drawn in several weeks . . . is this love?

Thanks,

Jeffrey A. Meyer
2313 Florida Drive, Apt. #C-15
Fort Wayne, Indiana
USA 46805

★★★★★★★★★★

Another of a seemingly endless supply of

Reefer Induced Letters

To Mr. David Sim

And to Mr. Francis Gerhard

I apologize for my last letter. It was wrong of me to assume that I could guess the beginning/ending to your 13 year work (or 26 year depending). What the hell was I on? This is worse than sending in the poll twice. (For which I also apologize).

Well, anyway, I would like to point out that, after looking at the shortage of *Cerebus* back issues at Comics Plus (who is usually over stocked), you must've gained quite a few new readers in the Monmouth County area. Two weeks ago they had a box and a half full of the Aardvark, now there is only a quarter box. Or maybe the owner put them in the back because they took up too much room. Oh well.

I'd just like to mention the passing (going out of business) of my favorite comic book store for the past eight years. (I'm sixteen) It is where I first met Cerebus, bought Fantastic Four #'s 48 & 49 for a combined total of ten bucks, and got the lyrics to a song given to me by the guy who wrote it. Fantasy Zone will be missed.

Catch ya later aardvark dude,

Reef
251 Third St.
Fair Haven, N.J.
USA 07704

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

I first loved her when I first gazed upon her. But, perhaps I should not begin like this. One should never start with the truth.

No names, no names for now.

I began working at the store in October. The Christmas rush was just beginning and my wife had just moved into low management at the fast-food joint where she worked. Me, I was selling radios and tapes and televisions and stuff I didn't know a whole hell of a lot about. She (not my wife, kiddos, if you haven't guessed by now) sold rings and things and stuff that she didn't care about.

I didn't notice her for a couple of days. And then . . . she did not walk past the department so much as glide by, cool, calm, a moment of peace in a bedlam of crass consumers the likes of which one can find only in the rural areas of the South. I was surrounded by backwood inbred cretins demanding microphones to attach to telephones to record conversations (I told them "Against Fed Law") and asking, "Have you got that song?", never bothering to specify which one, and I stopped and followed her with my eyes and watched her go into the department across from mine. Stopped and looked and wondered and then was dragged back down into the morass

of consumerism, screaming and kicking in my soul.

One day I was introduced to her in the lounge and we talked briefly. We found that we had both read Harlan Ellison and enjoyed him and we both wrote poetry and she wrote free form and I wrote sonnets in iambic pentametre because I enjoyed (no longer, no longer do I write poems) the freedom that I found within the rigid parameters of the sonnet. Then it was off to work and sneaking glances and shaking my head and remembering that I loved my wife (still do, aye, there's the rub). But hope grew within my breast and then one day I heard her say that she would never date another married man and what little half-hearted hope I had died. And I grew silent in her presence.

Shortly thereafter, my wife had to work the final shift on a Sunday night. Well, her store closes at 11:00 and she didn't roll in until 3 in the morning. I was still awake and highly perturbed. Now, one or two hours over-due I could deal with, but four gave me suspicions. I wouldn't mind if I found that she was attracted to another man for I was attracted to other women. I expected her to have impulses as did I, but I had never acted upon those impulses though given more than one chance. Hell, I had never even been in the position of being alone with another woman since I married my wife. I avoided such situations in an effort to cause my wife no concerns.

Anyways, my wife rolled in at 3:00 and I could tell that she knew that I was upset. So she explains that she had to clean the ice cream machine and she couldn't get the workers to move any faster. But that would only account for a couple of hours and when I expressed my concern she admitted that she had given a guy a ride home. I asked how he got to work and she said that he wasn't working that night and had been out drinking with his friends. I asked why his friends had left him there, she told me that she had suggested that he had best not be out drinking any more that night. And then she blurts out real quick that she got lost taking him home and coming back.

Well, I thought about it and I thought about it. I reckoned at the very least that my wife had shown bad judgement in putting herself in a car with a drunk if she was telling the truth and well, even now I don't care to think of the other. I mostly believed she was telling the truth, but sometimes I would look at my wife and my rage and pain would be such that I turned physically cold to the touch. And yet I still loved only her, or so I thought.

So the black days came upon me and 'twas as if the sun would lay a hold on me again. I would sit in the midst of rainstorms, my thoughts returning again and again to that dread suspicion. I began to watch 120 Minutes on MTV and find significance in the videos.

At work, I would put on a cheerful, but I tended to rarely smile or so I was told later. This woman (not my wife) and I would talk in passing and kid each other. Then, one day, I said to her, "if only I wasn't married, or if you were a little more liberal-minded, we would howl at the moon." And she laughed and went on about her business.

Until later when she passed me, stopped, said "I've been thinking and I am becoming more liberal-minded." I thought she was just having me on. However, she kept making these comments and whistling at me and finding reasons to drop by the department. I began to think that she was tired of my comments and was getting back at me by making fun of me.

One day I had an accident and split my pants at the crotch. She told me that I would have to stop thinking about her at work and I agreed. Later when I made the comment that if she got into me that she might not be able to handle me, she said that if I got into her she wouldn't let me go. Then I began to think that maybe there was something more here than I thought. After that, in a new pair of pants my wife had brought me, I passed the other and she said, "Hey, when can we get together later and split those open." I stopped, turned around, and said "You are serious, aren't you?" She looked me dead in the eye and said in a soft voice, "You don't know how serious, darling."

I didn't know what to do, so nu, I mumbled that I had to think and went back to work. So I called her on the internal store phone and said maybe we should get together. I did so because I began to think to myself why the hell not. I thought that my wife may have already cuckolded me and maybe I should get my own and so I called her. She told me that if we did it would have to be soon because she was taking another job soon and she didn't want to leave without being with me.

Over the next few days, we talked back and forth and made numerous plans which fell through due to scheduling conflicts and the fact that I didn't have a car some nights or she had to see her family and what not. Then one night I had the car and she had the place and the time and it was coming down to the wire. I went on my break and said to myself, "Boy, this is it. In 30 minutes, you will be with her and you are going to break your vow. Can you throw your marriage away?"

I couldn't. So I explained to her that I couldn't do that to my wife and I couldn't because I didn't want to use her. She asked for a chance to talk to me later and we did. She asked me if I had thought that she was just cheap and if I had just wanted to see how far she would go. I told her no, I didn't think less of her, I was immensely attracted to her, had been since I first saw her, she was the one of only two women I had ever thought of cheating on my wife with but I couldn't because I loved my wife, my wife is the only woman I had even been with (the truth, all this, I swear, from lips to the heavens) and I had thought I could but I couldn't hurt or use any woman like that.

So she left and I watched her go.

Only, I couldn't stop thinking of her and I could not stop my wondering about my wife. So I went out late and drank coffee at an all-night joint. Finally, to work through my feelings in my own mind, I wrote her a letter about myself, taking the blame for not going through with our rendez-vous, and telling her that she was not at fault, and how much I thought of her. I wrote the letter thinking that I would never see her to deliver it, but I carried it in my wallet anyways. This all two days since I had seen her last and thought that it was her last day on the job. Only it wasn't, she still had a week to work as I found out the next day.

I came into work the day after writing that letter, and there she was across from my department where I could stare at her and tear my heart out. Finally, I worked up the courage to give her that missive. At times I wish that I had not. Anyways, after giving her the letter, I ran around and tried to hide from this other woman that I would come to love. I was in the farthest corner I could, wondering if she would laugh at me, give me down the road, or, worst of all, just ignore me, when she came around the corner, marched right up to me, grabbed my hand and gave me two notes, turned around and walked out without saying a word.

I opened the first note wherein she had written that she could find the words to say how my letter made her feel but she wanted to tell me at someplace besides work if I wanted

to know. The second note was a poem that she wrote that I had inspired. I still have those notes. I will never lose them no matter the cost of keeping them.

And so, I began to write her letters and love sonnets. Even though she left the store and took another job and moved, I would make the time to find her and give her the notes I wrote, but we just couldn't get together. I began to think that perhaps she was just playing games and resolved one day, if we did not get together that night, to call it quits.

I saw her and asked to take her home. She gave me a letter to read first, saying, "Maybe you won't want to take me home." It was the damnedest letter I have read. She wrote that she loved me and wanted to be with me, but she didn't want to take me away from my wife since she could understand how much my wife loved me since she loved me more than I would ever know.

Well, I took her home. She showed me around her house and we wound up in her bedroom. She lay down on her bed and motioned me to sit down which I did, and we sat and talked for awhile. I am there, on my back, wondering if I should make a move or just leave, when she moves within arm's reach and I just reach out and pull her to me and, at last, joy of joys, I kiss her and she kisses me back. Suddenly we are holding each other and kissing and weeping and she whispers that when I hold her she feels as if nothing in the world can touch her. But she won't make love because it is the first time and she says that I make her feel 16 and shy. I say that I am so full of desire for her that I don't know if I can stop so perhaps I had best leave. She won't let me go though. We kiss and I hold her and we talk and tell each other things we never told anyone else. Deep personal things, things that have hurt us, how it turns out that we were both sexually assaulted, me as a child, she as a teenager, both of us by relatives, how she didn't trust men for a long while, how I was full of rage and unsure of my sexual identity, why hadn't we met in school, why polygamy was frowned on, oh a million things until finally I could stay no longer and had to leave.

I got back to see her at her house once and then she moved to a different place. We began to have the same problems of when we could meet and she became ill. She began to lash out at me over her illness and her problems with her family until one day she told me she was going to leave town. Just go and not look back. So I wrote her a good-bye letter and vowed in it to love her forever and to never write poems again where we consummate our love for I had lost the will to write and pretty much the will to live. I saw her the night before she was to leave and gave her the note, then left, thinking that she was gone from my life and I had lost not only my trust in my wife but my trust in all women. Damn it though, I loved them both still and I hated myself. But she didn't leave town I found out. I went to see her and she lashed out at me accusing me of abandoning her. I wrote her one more letter and I delivered it not more than three days ago.

So here I am today. I love my wife no matter that she may have done or not done. I love the other no matter what game she may be playing with me or not. And I hate myself for deceiving two good women into loving me. Now, at night, I lay awake praying for death to lay his pale cloak over me.

K-Man

No place
Nowhere

★★★★★★★★★★

*Was **Astoria** Raped?*

In "So" (*Cerebus* #94, by Dave Sim and Gerhard), Cerebus the Aardvark and Astoria have sexual intercourse. This upset many readers (at least many of the ones I heard from) because they believed Cerebus raped Astoria (though why they were more upset by that than by Cerebus killing babies, I have no idea). But I am not certain that Cerebus did, in fact, rape Astoria.

First, did Cerebus consider it a rape? The first woman we see Cerebus interested in is Jaka. Cerebus offers to kill a yak for her supper, which can be considered an act of love, and to drink apricot brandy out of her navel, which is the closest he ever comes to mentioning sex. Cerebus stays with the Countess, because she "sent him three hundred crowns," but they spend their time sparring. Then Cerebus wakes up to find he has spent the night with Sophia. Up to this point, Cerebus has considered her a nuisance, and done everything he can to avoid her. When Cerebus discovers that he and Sophia were married, he cries "NO! It can't be true!" As Weishaupt and Sophia discuss the consummation, Cerebus is violently sick, then says, "Weishaupt, you did this to Cerebus . . . Cerebus was drunk . . . No! Cerebus could never get that drunk . . . Cerebus was drugged!" to which Weishaupt agrees. It becomes clear that Weishaupt has manipulated Cerebus into this marriage as part of the politics involved with Cerebus becoming Prime Minister. Obviously, Cerebus was not a willing partner to the marriage, or the sex.

As we learn in "Sophia", Cerebus is, however, a believing Tarimite, and Tarimites do not have sex outside marriage and are virgins until they marry. As long as Cerebus is married, and has acquired a taste for sex, he does continue to have sex with Sophia, though, as she complains, not lovingly at all. Thus, up to the occurrences in "So," the only sex that Cerebus has had has been against his will, with a woman he does not like, for political reasons.

Astoria, for her part, had been manipulating Cerebus for some time. For the most part, she had been tied up in political games, though at least once she had flirted with him while pretending to be drunk. In "So," the following occurred in Astoria's cell, where she was chained to the wall, and Cerebus, as Pope, was confronting her.

ASTORIA: "I haven't much time, so I'm going to do you a favour, and after I do you a favour, I'll ask you to do *me* a favour."

CEREBUS: "Favour? What *kind* of favour?"

ASTORIA: "Oh, let's just say (begins removing her underpants) that I think I might be able to *help* you with one of your (removes underwear) acquired tastes. Oh, I *forgot*. You *can't, can* you? As a good orthodox Tarimite unless you're *married*." (drapes underwear over Cerebus' head).

CEREBUS: (as Most Holy, he divorces himself from Sophia, marries himself to Astoria, and has sexual intercourse with his new wife).

Astoria made a political arrangement with Cerebus, a favour for a favour. Cerebus, as Most Holy, held real power, at least in that all of his subjects believed that he did. Thus, by performing the divorce and the marriage, he had the right to have sex with her by the rules of Tarim, which were the only rules he followed regarding sex. Thus, Astoria had sex with him, against her will, with someone she didn't like, for political reasons.

Does Cerebus think Astoria was raped? I don't think so, because it was done legally, according to both law and religion, and this is the only way Cerebus has experienced sex.

Does Astoria think she was raped? I think that she will use it against Cerebus if she can, but it is obvious that she manipulated him into it. Also, her glib "Be still, O my trembling heart" suggests that the experience did not leave her with much emotional trauma. Does Dave Sim think Astoria was raped? Who knows, though the Judge predicts terrible suffering for Cerebus, and tells Cerebus that if he is "tempted—*ever*—to consider your suffering unjustified, just remember your second marriage." Do I think Astoria was raped? Most definitely, she was raped. But so was Cerebus, by Weishaupt and Sophia.

—Karen Williams

(This article originally appeared in ***Ciao!*** #2, a quarterly fanzine examining the comics industry's awareness of presentation of "issues." ***Ciao!*** #2 may be obtained for $2.50 (CAN $3.45) from James Drew, 1093 Plaza Drive, Sunnyvale, CA, 94089.)

★★★★★★★★★★

I hope there's one, I hope there's two . . .

Hi, Dave, it is me, Jim Smith. Long time, no talk. In fact, it has been more than a year (shit, let me change type styles. There. That's better.) since I last wrote. So, what's been happening with me?

Not much. I got diagnosed with diabetes in May of '90. Actually, what happened is that I experienced a rapid, unplanned weight loss, frequent urination, lethargy, and degradation of my eye-sight. The loss of my sight really scared me so I hit the doctor and found out that my blood sugar was 385. Normal is around about 110. Hey, I should have known something was wrong when little kids would come up to me and start licking my hand like it was a lollipop.

So, I wound up in the hospital for about a week with my eyes and my state of mind getting steadily worse.

There is one incident from my week-long sojourn into the bowels of modern medicine. I was hooked up to an I.V. and had a little accident. I pulled the needle loose without knowing it one day. I feel something warm splashing on my leg and look down. There are these scarlet puddles of blood. But where the hell is it coming from? I glance at my left hand and am trans-fixed by this slow steady drip of salty claret falling down from my fingers, falling down to the pure sterile white tile of this hospital bathroom. Everything slowed and I could hear my wife outside breathing, and the rustle of her skin as she moved, the inane dribble on the television, the pad-pad-pad of the nurses moving down the hall, the rain outside falling, falling down the world outside. And I thought, "Be quiet. Just let go. Stand here and watch the show."

I didn't. I got my diabetes under control. Got my eyes back. Got a job at a department store. Survived the Christmas rush.

That's basically where I am today.

I hope there's many watching over you,

James Smith
P.O. Box 1644
Wise, VA
USA 24293

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I just have to thank you for introducing me to Neil Gaiman.

I wasn't giving him a chance because I thought, for some reason, that he was the guy who did *Arkham Asylum*. Grant Morrison is still not getting a fair chance from me. Anybody who could produce that and think it was adult literature . . . well, that's neither here nor there, since indeed it *wasn't* Mr. Gaiman.

Your "preview" story about the Emperor Heliogobalus, along with the letters in Aardvark Comment from Cerebus fans who kept saying that *Sandman* was worth buying even if it was published by DC, finally convinced me to give it a try. I liked Heliogobalus especially because my weekly dose of video (I don't own a TV, but I spend one evening a week at a friend's house for a fix) has until recently been centered on reruns of *I, Claudius*. How appropriate that the first *Sandman* I bought was "August"! (In case Linda's wondering, I use American style for punctuation with quotes—ie, punctuation *within* the quotes—unless it is just obviously wrong for the sense, in which case I revert to British style, which puts non-quoted punctuation *outside* the quotes; I know this sort of thing drives typesetters crazy, and all I can do is apologize). I like it very much. About a week or so later, I bought the *Doll's House* "graphic novel" (we won't get into that again just now, except to say that it's an excellent novellette). A few days later, I went back and bought all the back issues in the store. Wow!

The most astounding thing was that upon rereading *Doll's House* I ended up looking up "vavasour" and "annulet." Both were words I had originally more-or-less skipped over, since their general meaning was clear from context, but on rereading wondered whether he had made them up (which, in the larger context, was quite possible) or if they were real words. When I looked them up, I found that the first had a specific meaning which illuminated the general sense I had gotten from context perfectly. The second turned out to be an even more interesting case: derived from Latin, its current meaning is restricted to a narrow architectural use that made no sense in the context, but its etymology showed a relation to the metaphysical concepts underlying Gaiman's fantasy world that revealed Gaiman may well know more about the term than the writers of my dictionary.

Now I pride myself, among other things, on my vocabulary. Although deliberate obscurantists like William Buckley can find words unfamiliar to me, they are often reaching beyond more common words just as good merely for effect, and I usually don't even bother to look them up. The last writer who sent me to a dictionary was Joyce, and no comic book writer has done so since I was eight years old.

I have been humbled as a writer many times and often by good comic book writers: Alan Moore, yourself, even Doug Moench and Steve Englehart in their prime. I have often felt upon reading a passage "Gee, I wish I could have written that" while knowing that I very probably could not.

Gaiman humbles me as a *reader*. No one in this medium has *ever* done that before, Dave, not even you. Very few writers in *any* medium can do that to me, and fewer can do it and make me like it. Again, I mention Joyce.

I doubt very much that he can sustain this kind of power for 50 issues, much less 300, so you're still the best at the long-form organic graphic narrative. But *damn*, he's good.

One thing bothers me. Steve at Fantasy Books orders 50 *Sandman (Sandmen?)* a month, and there are maybe five copies left of last month's issue in his store (he's enlightened enough to believe that the ideal order keeps a few recent back issues on the shelves). I'm sure he doesn't order more than fifteen *Cerebi*—maybe less than a dozen—and there are more of them on the shelves than *Sandman* issues, not even counting

the Bi-weeklies. I'm not begrudging Gaiman the money or the audience. But it just seems strange to me that so many people could possibly appreciate *Sandman* and not like *Cerebus*.

I have a feeling most of them *don't* really appreciate it. If I believed that 30 of the 50 bought *Sandman* and nothing else, I wouldn't be bothered. Not long ago I was buying only *Cerebus*, although fans of *Sandman* or *Love & Rockets* might have thought I was crazy. Likewise, I can see people buying all three of those books, as I do now. But I have a feeling there are a lot of people buying *Sandman* who don't buy either of the other two, but buy several Marvel mutant books or other superhero comics. On one hand, this is a positive thing, for it shows that there is hope for them, and they may graduate to better things. On the other hand, it is a depressing sign of the commercial power of yoking oneself to the Beast and being a part of the Warner Communications empire.

I doubt if you're ever seriously tempted to go that route, but just in case you need some positive reinforcement for your outsider stance, I pass on an anecdote from Bill Griffith (I interviewed him a couple of days ago). It seems that Disney, who had been interested at one time in the fabled Zippy movie project that's been kicking around town (in Hollywood, there is only one Town) for several years, got interested again. They called him in for a meeting. He and his agent went in and met with three Suits, totally humorless, every horrible thing you ever imagined Suits could be. They told him how much they liked his concept, how much they "dug" his script, how they didn't want to miss out on the "Zippy bandwagon." They only had one problem. "It's the stubble. Could you lose the stubble?" Bill thought they were joking. He made some jokes about Don Johnson, and the possibility of Zippy as a sex symbol. But these were Suits, absolutely humorless. They waited until he was done, and then went on as if he hadn't spoken (and *this* is when he realized they were serious): "Try to think about it this way: Can you see Zippy greeting visitors at Disneyland?"

Have a nice day.

P.S.—In case at some point above you said to yourself "then why the fuck doesn't he just *write* Neil Gaiman?" and skipped on down to the signature to see who this fuckwad was (and hoping that you pause for the P.S.): I'm getting there, or was, and besides he doesn't have an 8-page letter column.

Steve Bolhafner
3420 Missouri
St. Louis, MO
USA 63118

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

About that Cerebus subscription ad you run on the inside-back cover; I can just picture the letter asking permission you sent to Claudia Schiffer:

"Dear Claudia, If I tattooed Cerebus on your body, would you hold it against me?"

I am truly sorry,

Brian Borges
806 Upper Wellington St.
Hamilton, Ontario
L9A 3R6

★★★★★★★★★★

Dearest Dave and Gallant Gerhard,

I haven't been reading *Cerebus* recently because I went to Iowa to go to school last year and *Jaka's Story* had just ended and I didn't think I'd find *Cerebus* in Iowa and I was right. I am gonna buy issue 151 when it comes out, though. I'm not going back to Iowa, either. I did buy the *Cerebus* reprint book (first 25) the other day and when I bring it up to the counter the guy only charges me $12.50 because it was on the half-price rack. So I ask him if they're gonna have *High Society* in sometime and he tells me "NO" like they were dying to get that book out of there and would never take any more if you sent 'em complementary copies. I was a little disappointed but at least I got mine for half price. I was gonna order *High Society* but then I got confused about how much $27.50 Canadian is in American money plus I'm lazy. I may order it sometime. I looked through it in a different store and it looked pretty cool.

On a related topic, *Cerebus* is a great book, but I've found all the best comics in local shops are in the fifty cent bin of shit they want to get rid of. And one time in eleventh grade I asked Tom "Funky Man" Young (the English teacher) why you can't end a sentence with a preposition and he tried to explain it to me but he was just talking in circles and not making any sense as far as I was concerned. Then again, I had trouble with the Canadian/American funds thing, so maybe I'm at fault.

The other night I was at a party and me and two other 19/20 year old males are hanging out and this really, really attractive girl (young lady/woman/you know what I mean) we all knew came over to say goodbye ('cuz she was leaving, not because she was about to kill us all or herself or anything) and me and the two other folks I was with were falling all over ourselves to say goodbye to her, like she was our *close, personal* friend or something, just because she was really hot looking. I laughed to myself and it reminded me of the whole Cassandra the Witch thing. Hope I'm not too far behind the letter column times, but I'm sure there's still no dearth of people willing to write you and tell you how incredibly alternative they are because they read *Cerebus* and take LSD and listen to really underground bands no one else is cool enough to have heard of, like Fugazi or the Pixies. Oh yeah, and they hate the X-Men. Can't forget that.

Not to be too anal retentive about it, but about fifteen issues ago somebody wrote you and said they listen to the Dead Kennedys song "All Religions Suck" when they read *Church & State*. The song's called "Religious Vomit". Like I said, not to pick nits or anything, but when I see something like that, it stays with me until I tell someone.

One time I was in the same store that sold me the first *Cerebus* book for half price and the guy who writes that comic *The Tick* was there and I had brought some of my issues to have them signed (not for any particular reason, now that I think about it, although perhaps the monetary increase of their value was in my subconscious) and the guy signed 'em, and when he was done this other guy, who was standing next to the author/artist dude, took my comics and he signed 'em as well and I was like "Who the hell are you and what makes you think I want your scribbles on my comics?". Turns out he was the inker or something. No offense meant to inkers. I just have no idea what the hell they do.

Dave and Gerhard, I think the letters column provides a very valuable service, as it gives people like myself (and unlike myself) a place to write things like this and have them printed. Or at least a place to direct our energies.

Like I said, *Cerebus* is the only comic I buy that costs more than half a buck. I did get a free issue of Comics Buyers Guide the other day and Jesus fuck, comics are big business. I do buy *Puma Blues* sometimes, when I can find it. And I buy

Hate, sometimes. But two bucks is a lot of money, I think. But then again, (I was reflecting today) I am incredibly cheap. But engagement/ wedding rings are the biggest scam/ rip-off since . . . well, I don't know since what, but it costs $17 to join the "Bo Club" (a Bo Jackson personality cult) and my close, personal friend Bob Larsen always asks people to send him $500 and some people do it.

Sincerely,

Jeff Mason
605 South Street
Holbrook, MA
USA 02343

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Let me clear a few things up. I'll probably catch hell if my first letter to you is printed. I don't care. I wrote it, and I'm proud of parts of it. I did, however, write it while angry. I wrote my second letter to you while bored (I'm sorry, I don't want you to think I only write because of boredom). Well, that's out of the way. Today's topic (It's really the same topic all over again): **Political Correctness, Social Entropy, and the Heat-Death of the Universe.**

First, some background science for all you business majors: Pour some hot water and some cold water in a jar. At first, there are areas of hot and cold in the jar, but gradually the system will stabilize with a constant temperature throughout. This process is described by the second law of thermodynamics, as anyone who's had chemistry or physics will tell you.

Welcome to social thermodynamics. A terribly inaccurate name for the group of ideas I'm about to propose, but I'm no semanticist. I'll leave that to Edwin Newman and S.I. Hyakawa, thanks. Sometime around 1969, our society reached a state of maximum complexity. We had an almost amazing number of people spouting off original and interesting ideas. People took pride in that they were different from other people. They reveled in it. Nowadays things have changed. These days a kind of facism has sprung up everywhere with champions who tolerate no dissension and show no mercy in their persecution of persons with other beliefs. They seek to increase the social entropy of our society. They want to reduce everyone to a sort of lowest common denominator in which no one has an idea that goes against the grain, and everyone forces him/herself to believe that he/ she is happy. Everyone walks around aimlessly being "involved" and occasionally bumps into someone else and tells him/her how much he/ she respects and admires his/her beliefs/opinions/sexual orientation/ culture, apologizes earnestly for bumping into him/her and goes about his/her merry way.

One application of the second law of thermodynamics is the universe will eventually "run down" an event known as "heat-death." All the energy in the universe will eventually become heat, evenly distributed throughout the system. My point is this. As the unchecked facism of the Political Correctness movement seeks to spread the once focused energies of social change evenly throughout society, they become weak and ineffectual. Like our universe, our society is heading all too rapidly for a death wrought not in violence, but in stagnation.

The second law has an exception. Entropy only increases in systems to which no energy is added. Add energy. Speak out for what you believe, not what you've been told to believe. It doesn't matter what it is you believe, just as long as it's what you really believe. Be the overman, not the last man. Do whatever you want as long as what you do is yours. Play your music really loud. Wear whatever clothes you like. Don't conform because it's easy to conform, only conform if you want to. Never ask anyone else what you believe. Live free and die hard.

Dave, I'd like to thank you for letting me build my soap box on your pages. I hope I didn't get too political for you. Aardvark Comment is wonderful in it's scope and content, the only letter page worthy of being printed in the same book with *Cerebus*.

Live free or die,

Gary E. Walker
S.P.O. Box 1420,
College of Charleston
Charleston, SC
USA 29424

P.S. Does anyone else out there go to Charleston? If so, call me at 953-3244 or come see me at St. Philip's-616B.

P.P.S. Vote Libertarian in '92. If the democrats collapse, we're next in line for the big two.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Well, I finally got around to putting pen to paper. God knows I've dithered enough. Let me say first of all that *Cerebus* is easily the best twenty pages of comic I read a month. I mean, I read other stuff, but *Cerebus* holds a certain wonderful mysteriousness. I really like stuff like *Sandman, Hellblazer* et al, but it all works within boundaries, which despite being extensive boundaries are still boundaries. I never really know what is going to happen from page to page let alone several issues ahead.

I don't feel the need to bitch about other people's views on abortion or the supposed state of the letters column. I would however like to say something on M'Oak's letter in 147. M'Oak seems to give the impression (at least to me) that he had been pushed to some brink of sanity, some mental hell, where, then and only then, rape became a real prospect. Remember how interested we all were up until the point where he talks about how he "could have covered her mouth so the kids wouldn't hear". However, as soon as we reached that point, a significant majority of us back away from the guy and what he has to say, calling even the thought of rape a subject never briefly entertained by ourselves. We all know this is bullshit, no matter how "liberated" or dedicated to equality. Whenever we have sexual fantasies over a woman she has to be virtually screaming for it because we are all shit scared about being a rapist, so are quick to jump on any guy who is honest enough to admit that he has thought about it at least once. Without a woman's desire/ permission any sexual act by a man may be considered as rape. I'm not trying to get at M'Oak, the guy has guts for writing to a forum of 26,000 about something so personal.

Sorry this letter is such a mess, Dave. It's difficult to mix sycophantic adulation and genuine opinion. Thanks for listening Dave.

Nick Holdstock
57 Park Hill Road
Wallington, Surrey
United Kingdom, SM6 0RJ

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim,

Let me begin by agreeing with Neil Gaiman that comics are indeed a valid late-twentieth century art form. But let me also clarify that creators such as Gaiman, Moore, Miller, and most notably yourself are the means by which the medium has slowly been elevated to that status. As with any entertainment medium, there is an abundance of average, standard fare and a minority of exciting, cutting-edge material. With that in mind, *Cerebus* exists almost within a vacuum.

The best thing about *Cerebus* is the medium it is being presented in. *Cerebus* is the best example of what the comic industry can achieve. Comics are a highly creative and diverse entertainment medium and unless others like Dave Sim are willing to take the creative and financial risks to produce a comic like *Cerebus*, the industry will have cheated itself of some truly great things.

There are really two other major points I must make in this letter. First, there is no other creator in comics that tells a story better than Dave Sim. Many critics of contemporary literature point to the fact that there is no "great" storyteller in this age. My answer to. them is that they have to look no further than *Cerebus* and Dave Sim. Secondly, Gerhard makes a tremendous difference to the book in the sheer detail of the artwork and the mood and substance he gives to the book. The book would be excellent without him, but his addition makes it that much better.

I now have a series of questions for you Dave. First, I would like to know if there are any other appearances of Cerebus outside of the series that are relevant to the storyline that I don't know about. I did not start collecting *Cerebus* until shortly before *Jaka's Story* so I am still struggling to locate back issues. Don't ever believe someone who says they can't start reading *Cerebus* because the storyline is somewhere in the middle. It's bullshit. Good writing and art stand on their own. Every issue of *Cerebus* can be enjoyed individually, although you're cheating yourself if you don't try to find out the complete story.

Anyway, second question. Do you know of any stores in Canada that I could contact to find the issues I am missing. They are nearly impossible to find in my area of the U.S. You never see the earlier issues. I will enclose an SASE in case you know of any.

Finally, I would like to know if you still sell original pages of art or sell original drawings. I would be very interested in having an original piece of your artwork, even if it was just a simple sketch. Please understand that this is not something that would get thrown into the bottom of a closet or comic box. Rather, your artwork is something that deserves nothing less to be framed and displayed for the unique artform that it is. If you do still sell your work, could you let me know in the SASE I have enclosed. I'm not exactly rich, but it would be very worth it to me.

Well, thanks for letting me say hello. I can't wait to see what you do with Cerebus in the coming years.

Sincerely,

Christopher Killackey

P.S. In case this letter actually gets printed, I have two friends at school I'd like to say hello to. Jo Ann and Ian, HI!

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

People use to think homosexuality was a preference. People chose to be gay. Then, along came the story about how kids who don't have a 'father figure' or are neglected have a higher chance of becoming homosexual.

Well, have you heard the latest? I heard a radio talk show the other day which said homosexuality might be caused by the something-or-other gland. They said that homosexuals have this gland and it's only half the size of a heterosexual's. Wouldn't that mean that homosexuality is hereditary?

I know for a fact that my father is 'gay' and I'm only sixteen. I believe I am heterosexual since I am attracted to women and their bodies. But if I ever get the urge to be with a man, I will kill myself.

You see, I believe homosexuality leads to child molestation since my own father molested or tried to molest at least three of my friends and who knows how many friends of my sister.

Well, on a lighter note, I really appreciate the time and effort you and Gerhard put into Cerebus.

Thanks,

Rob

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I hope you can read this. I am without a word processor, and not only am I unable to make a decent alphabet soup, but I had to drag out this old Remington from the museum of lost toys. I'll admit the touch of the keys and the bang of the hammers are more satisfying than the cold hum of electronics.

Now that I have liberated that opening salvo of digression, I call on all members to rise for the following minutes.

I was at UC Berkeley, having taken a midterm essay test, when I went to use the bathroom. Education is my laxative (was that a Mickey Spillane title? If so, I apologize for the plagiarism.) Something about the seat of learning and the flush of success. I sat down in the stall and opened my paper to the singles network, hoping for "Looking for a house-husband who really works, does laundry, and knows family recipe for pop-overs and stroganoff. Cooks great omelettes. Willing to support writing career in exchange for monkey love", when the following, which I will now paraphrase, struck me from the bathroom stall wall, and engaged that essay writing fool mood:

"I am a male feminist . . ." followed by more politically correct ca-ca, then, ". . . I will never treat a woman badly, because I won't be the one who turns her into a lesbian . . ." then more horse puckey about liberal thinking and gay rights.

I set down the paper, grabbed a pen from my satchel, and replied as follows:

"Number One, 'male feminist' is a self cancelling phrase. A man cannot separate self-interest or motivation from woman's rights. What's in it for you, bub? Besides you have nothing at stake, really. Nothing to lose. The very fact you are a man eliminates the word feminist. Advocate, maybe. Feminist, no."

"Secondly, the very idea that your actions could possibly turn a woman into a lesbian refutes every feminist doctrine. You are assuming that you have the power to alter a woman's lifestyle, denying empowerment, and confirming co-dependency."

"You want to change something, then change what is masculine. Change yourself, elk-breath. Change what it means to be a man."

"For this I'm not reading my paper? Fuck you, fuzz face."

I felt much better after that.

I have also realized after my latest (published in Comments) letter I could be getting myself into deep semantic trouble.

I'm not sure how to elaborate, but I hope you'll give me the chance.

About a year ago, a friend of mine who has been married for over six years to the woman he dated through high school, and lived with for about four years, was having trouble with this sexual role thing. He always made the first move in the sack, after all these years, and felt frustrated when she was turned off, because she wasn't in the mood. Was it him? Or was it pressures from her work, or even what she had for dinner? I felt totally immune. I haven't had the most frequent sex life, but always great. If things didn't click, I'd walk

away, or just be good friends. I've slept with women without having sex. I would even debate whether I like screwing or sleeping more.

I'm not sure exactly how to elaborate, but recently I dated a woman who was a real space cadet. She told me, honestly, that Glen Close in "Fatal Attraction" was a damned good role model. At that time I should have sensed a cue to exit stage left. In fact, there were several cues to exit.

The key seems to be that "no" means "no". However, when one is called the next day to be told that a "No" was a "yes", confusion reigns.

Suddenly, I find myself acknowledging that although there is not quote-unquote "justifiable rape", that there is cause. That the roles haven't changed enough to alter this.

It gets worse when pick-up bars enter the equation. Now you're mixing alcohol with meeting people for the first time with the end goal of having sex.

I wish I had the answer. But all I have are questions. Very politically incorrect questions. Questions that never occurred to me, because I was always that sensitive macho kinda guy.

And lately, I'm getting into situations where I'm meeting women on the cusp of their relationships. When one night it hangs in the balance, the night they see me. One night of serendipity and they would be mine. Attractive, intelligent, incredible women, and this question really hangs me up, now. It seems that only women who have nothing else to do are ready for the time it takes to develop communication and trust.

Dave. Love is like jury duty, is what I'm trying to say.

(By the way, go see "Thelma and Louise" the second it plays at your theater. I was invited to the premiere last night. It's genre car chase stuff, but feministic, without being offensive, but uncommercial.)

Similarly, we had this brouhaha in the Bay Area over Mills College for Women going co-ed, last year. It's interesting because a friend of mine who teaches was aware that in a co-ed classroom, boys get 75% of the teacher's attention. She tried to change this, and still clocked herself at 60% minimum. Makes you think don't it?

I now open for the following minutes to be read as a reply to the "Atomic Punk", who had some very nasty things to say about protestors in *Cerebus* #145.

In reply: I think protesting did stop the war. Years ago, in protest of the support of Nicaraguan Contra by the US, Brian Willson lost his legs blocking a train at the Concord Naval Weapons Station. People, and Congress especially, took notice of what was going on. The right people still haven't gone to jail, and if Reagan did, he'd probably think it was just a damn James Cagney movie he was in. But protest is right, and protest works. Also The Atomic Punk guy is missing a severe distinction between the Vietnam War and Operation Panty Shield. That distinction is that in the latest political action the protestors supported the troops, and what better way to support them than to see that they come home alive. (Dog tags aren't the greatest in footwear). Closing freeways here in S.F. was better than, like, in Norway where the protestors blew up gas stations. Besides, blocking freeways combines the best of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

During the war, I had the grand opportunity to see a comedian who couldn't keep current events out of his act, while I was accompanied by a woman from work and her ma, two self righteous republicans, who can't make the distinction that anti-choice is part of the Republican platform, as they attend pro-choice rallies.

Furthermore, I had gotten into deep shit with them for telling them, with a couple of beers under my belt, that Nancy Reagan was a satanist who had a witch in San Francisco sacrificing sheep so her husband would get elected. That, and being the token Liberal didn't help.

So, the comedian says, in the tradition of Randy Newman and Jonathan Swift, "I gotta take BART to work, 'cause all the freeways are blocked. Hey, war is one thing, but now this is inconveniencing me." To which my companions, in the tradition of the Scarecrow from the "Wizard of Oz" said, "Right On!"

I equated most of the Atomic Punk's crayon on paper musings in the same way. The more commonly protesting is treated by the media, the more inconvenient it needs to make itself. And there will always be Greeks on spring break or cholo's looking to break a few windows, giving protest a bad name, doing the work of the White House Press Corps.

This last protest was to be admired. All of my friends were quite willing, and bragged about, going to jail. In contrast to the conservatives, who in the sixties used the bumper sticker slogan, "America: Love It or Leave It!", protestors were yelling at war supporters to get their fat butts to Saudi Arabia or shut up. Rightly so. The great thing about American protest, that other countries never possess, is a great sense of humor, like the chants of "Send George Bush, send Dan Quayle, send Neil, too, when he gets out of jail."

Protest is great. It gets people's attention. Focuses them. Polarizes. Makes you think and feel, whatever side you are on. But you have to take a side. If you are in the middle of the road, you get runned over. It isn't a TV war. It's in your face.

The number one reason we were out there? To get over a feeling of impotence, of being on the margin, while history is being made. The impotence of knowing that your government is waging a war that Napoleon, Alexander and Hector would have frowned on in its cowardice, while Achilles would have shown up to mutilate the dead bodies when they were through.

Protest is the conservatives' best friend. It's cathartic and makes people feel they have a choice when there are none. Otherwise, discontent would rise unseen, until Barbara serves cake to the homeless.

The American Way is to make the nation seem balanced between anarchy and full capitalism. If you read some of the shit our founding fathers said for political leverage (Esp. Thomas Jefferson's "If the system works, there should be a revolution every twenty years.") and to stave off counter-revolution that kept happening in France after their revolution, you might have a better understanding.

It's not a perfect system. After all, the Atomic Punk is included in the First Amendment. But it's America, Goldarnit!

(As the audience breaks into patriotic tears, we cue Rosanne Barr to sing the national anthem and scratch her genitals.)

P.S. Thanks for running the last letter and the couple of personal replies. You had the best answer to writing from personal experience. However, it was kinda chickenshit for you not to read the story I sent along, but thanks just the same. A much better answer is found in the essay "A General Reply" by Mark Twain, found in the anthology *Life As I Find It*, edited by Charles Neider, 1977. Mark Twain wouldn't read my short story, either, but he's dead. If he were alive, I'd imagine he'd be too busy scratching at the inside of his coffin to get around to it.

P.P.S. You'll have to forgive me for not retyping the earlier part of this letter now that I've gotten me self a brand spanking new fucking typewriter. Anyway, I did want to make sure the additional intellectual regurgitation was included:

A woman I work with (the very same fascisti who applauded the comedian for being incensed that war might interfere with getting to work, but not the one who idolized Glenn Close) thought it was quite hilarious to say that men are pigs, until the tenth time I broke into a series of snorts, huffs, and oinks. Since then I've decided to avoid people who make life difficult wherever possible, including this Miss Congeniality. Recently, upon passing her desk, where she was sitting with two other people, one of them male, I heard her utter, "Men are Dicks." I barely restrained myself from making a scene in the middle of the office by screaming, "IF you left men alone entirely I'm sure both sexes would profit. In fact, I would love to introduce you to a manly woman in a South-of Market bar, who would give you a pair of balls then break them for you. I have nothing but passion and compassion for all of womankind, but between your clucking and mooing, there is irrefutable evidence that cows and chickens can, in fact, mate." Now for every twenty minutes I spend listening to feminist doctrine, I have to spend five minutes listening to Dave the Artist, who makes Nietzche sound like a kept husband (who refuses to help me on my "Single Page", because he "doesn't do word balloons."). In reply to charges of date rape against Bay Area men, especially college students, Dave has decided to withhold sex from dates. Between the two of us we've decided that the best solution to all this anti-male bullshit is that before any woman can speak out against men she must wear a penis for a month, in exchange we men will agree to suffer through menstruation and PMS, as well, besides being the one it's directed at. All those in agreement say "Here, here.".

Since I haven't touched on protest in this P.P.S., I offer the following: Have you heard about the protest at People's Park? Against the building of a sandlot Volleyball court? Quite enjoyable. For one thing, it turned the whole area into a war zone. Secondly, could you possible think of anything more surrealist, even dada, than protesting Volleyball? The sixties had Kent State, and the Nineties have Volleyball. Picture an old man watching a Volleyball game with his grandson, "Yeah, and we coulda put a stop to the game once and for all back in ninety-one, if it wasn't for the damned wooden bullets."

Later, Dave, and in the words of Henry Miller: We have two American flags always, one for the rich and one for the poor. When the rich fly it it means things are under control; when the poor fly it it means danger, revolution, anarchy. End of quote.

Thom E. Lake
2410 Colusa Street
Pinole, CA
USA 94564

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim,

Support for *Cerebus* in Singapore is relatively strong and it would be pretty strange for a comic shop not to bring your comic in. Your fans invariably heap praises upon you and I am no exception. But sometimes I wonder how seriously we actually take this work?

I've been reading back issues of the Comics Journal filled with columns analysing, debating and dissecting *Maus*. In contrast, almost nothing comparable has been done concerning *Cerebus* when it would stand to benefit much more from such examinations. *Cerebus* is funny, moving and filled with wonderful characters, but it is also filled with allusions, allegorical and otherwise, which I cannot begin to understand.

In the Introduction to *Indian Summer* by Hugo Pratt and Milo Manara, there is a short paragraph where a reviewer waxes lyrical on a simple sequence of silent frames. Why has nothing similar been done for *Cerebus*? Why hasn't anyone sought to interpret your dream sequences? Of what significance are Cerebus' hallucinations? What do the words "Something fell" (in *Church & State*) refer to? Did you plan the existence of three Aardvarks right from the onset of Cerebus/Cerberus? We all have ideas on these things so why don't we take a little time to share and discuss them?

I think the comics industry suffers from a lack of belief in itself. Do your readers believe that you are in perfect control of every aspect of your creation? Is every expression, every word and every prop chosen with careful deliberation? Is this a work of integrity and is Cerebus a work of art? If so, then why do we fail to discuss Cerebus in any detail? (Ans: Laziness; Cerebus is not art; Let's not take this too seriously, its just a comic; Does he really want to receive serious letters; Not in the mood etc.) Would we fail accordingly if faced at this moment with Kafka or Hesse? And if these literary figures are too big, what about film makers like Polanski, Bergman, Lang, Hitchcock etc.? Even as I write this, I see that I have committed a similar sin. My only excuse being my lack of foundation in any form of literary criticism.

Before I sign off . . . you expressed admiration for *A Contract With God* in Cerebus Jam. Don't you find *New York* a much more impressive work? . . . Surely *Sandman* isn't the only good thing coming out from DC. I recall the final two Morrison issues of *Animal Man*, certain issues of *Doom Patrol*, the third issue of *Books of Magic* and the *Adam Strange* mini. It is also a pity that *Skreemer* got completely forgotten two years back. Wishing you continued success in all your future endeavours!

Yours sincerely,

Ng Suat Tong
26 Westlake Avenue
Singapore 2057

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Wild, violent sex causes bruises.

Sincerely,

Tim Cosgrove
Ithaca, NY

★★★★★★★★★★

Writing is like prostitution. First you do it for love, then for a few friends, and finally for money.

Dear Dave,

I used to know who said that, but now I can't remember. Still, it goes along with the end of *Engines of the Night*, Barry Malzberg's book about the science fiction field. Don't know if you've read it, but wow, what an ugly, cynical book. I had trouble putting it down and all the time I'm thinking, "Maybe I should give up on this writing stuff."

Enclose is the introduction to Pat Califia's short story collection, *Macho Sluts*. Alex, the lady in my writers group who lent it to me said it was interesting because "it gave you an idea of what it was like to be a despised minority within a despised minority." True as this is, it is rather like reading *Fear of Flying* and saying, "Wow, there are some really heavy sex scenes in this." There are, but you have missed an awful lot if

that is all that you come away from the book with.

I also enjoyed reading this book because I remember in the *Joy of Lesbian Sex* that there are no S&M lesbians, that the desire to hurt people was a male instinct and had no place in the relationship of one woman to another. This is "The Dutiful Daughter" stuff that Pat is talking about on page 13.

There's a story in the book called, "The Hustler," which is set in a "Mad Max" sort of America where the Matriarchy has taken over, let technology go to hell and blamed it on the men and their symbols (vibrators are legal, but only the non penetrating type, etc.). The hustler of the title is a "top" forced to make a living as a prostitute because she won't grow her hair long, take off her pants, and throw away her leather. Really depressing stuff. But then political correctness (and "The Hustler" is a story of it carried to its ultimate conclusion) is not about freedom. It is about equality.

History is pretty firm in its judgement of equality. In every society that has ever seriously tried it, equality has always meant "equally poor," "equally squalid," and "equally repressed." This applies even to the island cultures that I happen to like. It is just that their's is a poverty, squalor, and repression that I could live with. There are probably people who could say the same about the Quakers, or the Marxists.

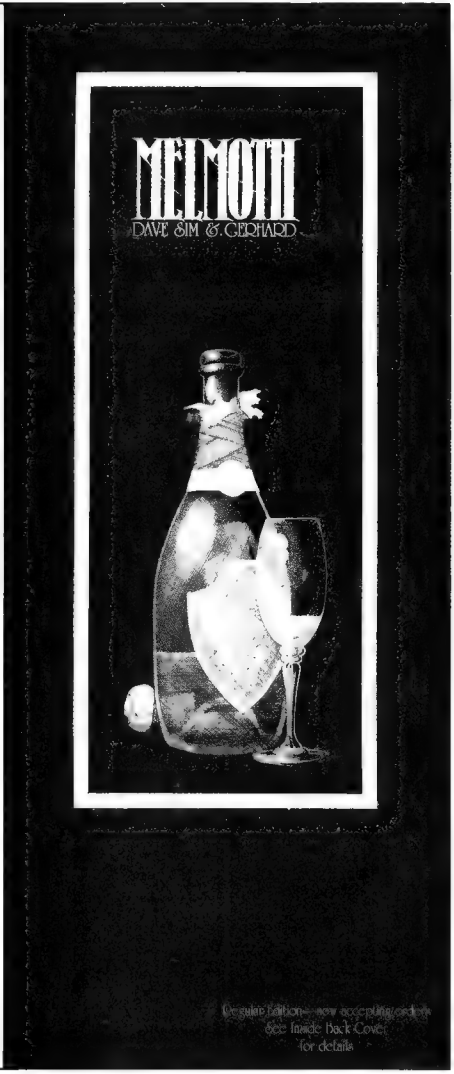
That is about all I have. Thanks for getting me interested in Wilde. I am sorry to see him go again, but I am looking forward to the next novel. Be Cool,

Synaptically Yours,

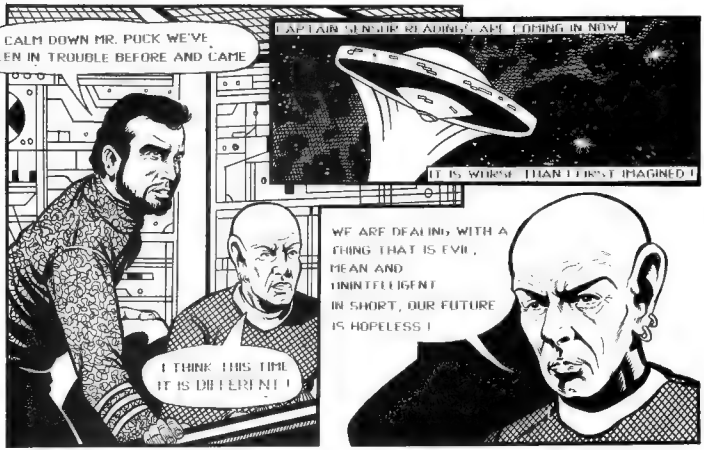
Eric

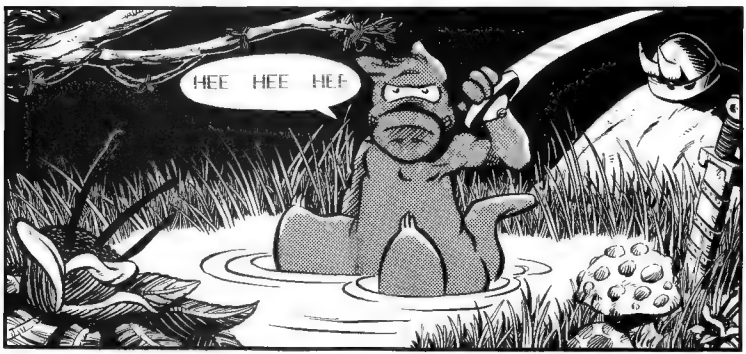
P.S. At Readercon, they asked Malzberg why he'd written so much (fourteen novels a year for most of the early 70's) and he said, "Because I wanted to push it. I wanted to find the boundaries. I wanted to find out how long does it take to write a novel? Three days. How long does it take to write a bad novel? Sixteen hours." The writer's equivalent of the 24 hour comic book?

★★★★★★★★★★



CAPTAIN, CAPTAIN
WE'RE IN GRAVE DANGER !
THE LAST VOYAGE
OF THE SINGLE PAGE
BY DAVE DAY LETTERING: WES CHISAMORE


CALM DOWN MR. POCK WE'VE
BEEN IN TROUBLE BEFORE AND CAME
I THINK THIS TIME
IT IS DIFFERENT !
CAPTAIN SENSOR READINGS ARE COMING IN NOW
IT IS WORSE THAN I FIRST IMAGINED !
WE ARE DEALING WITH A
THING THAT IS EVIL,
MEAN AND
UNINTELLIGENT
IN SHORT, OUR FUTURE
IS HOPELESS !


HEE HEE HEE

THE END

FATRIARCHY

SOME TABLETS FROM SPRING DEER'S DIARY

©DAVID MORRIS

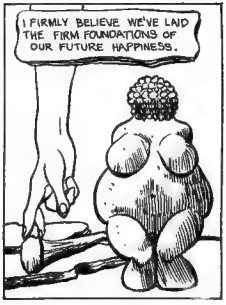
A SINGLE PAGE.

AND HOW SINCE IT'S US WHO ARE GIVING THE TRIBE THIS EXTRA FOOD THAT IT'S ONLY FAIR WE HAVE SOME BONUS GRUB, WHEN THE MEN ARE OFF HUNTING.

IT WAS AN AWKWARD MOMENT! FOR WHILE IT'S CLEAR, WE DO DESERVE EXTRA, MEN CAN BE A BIT... OBTUSE ABOUT THESE THINGS.
I WAS WONDERING WHAT TO SAY, WHEN ENDLESS FLOW PIPED UP:

IT IS A SIGN OF THE GODDESS'S FAVOUR! AS WE, HER PRIESTESS'S GROW LIKE HER SPIRITUALLY, OUR BODIES MIRROR HER GREAT FORM.
SHE'S INSPIRED!
I'LL SAY!
SHE'S... BIG, THEN?
OOHH-VAST.

SO WHAT WITH THIS, AND GRUNTING PASSION HAVING ESTABLISHED SEX WITH YOUNG MEN AS A RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY...
DON'T YOU WANT THE CROPS TO GROW?



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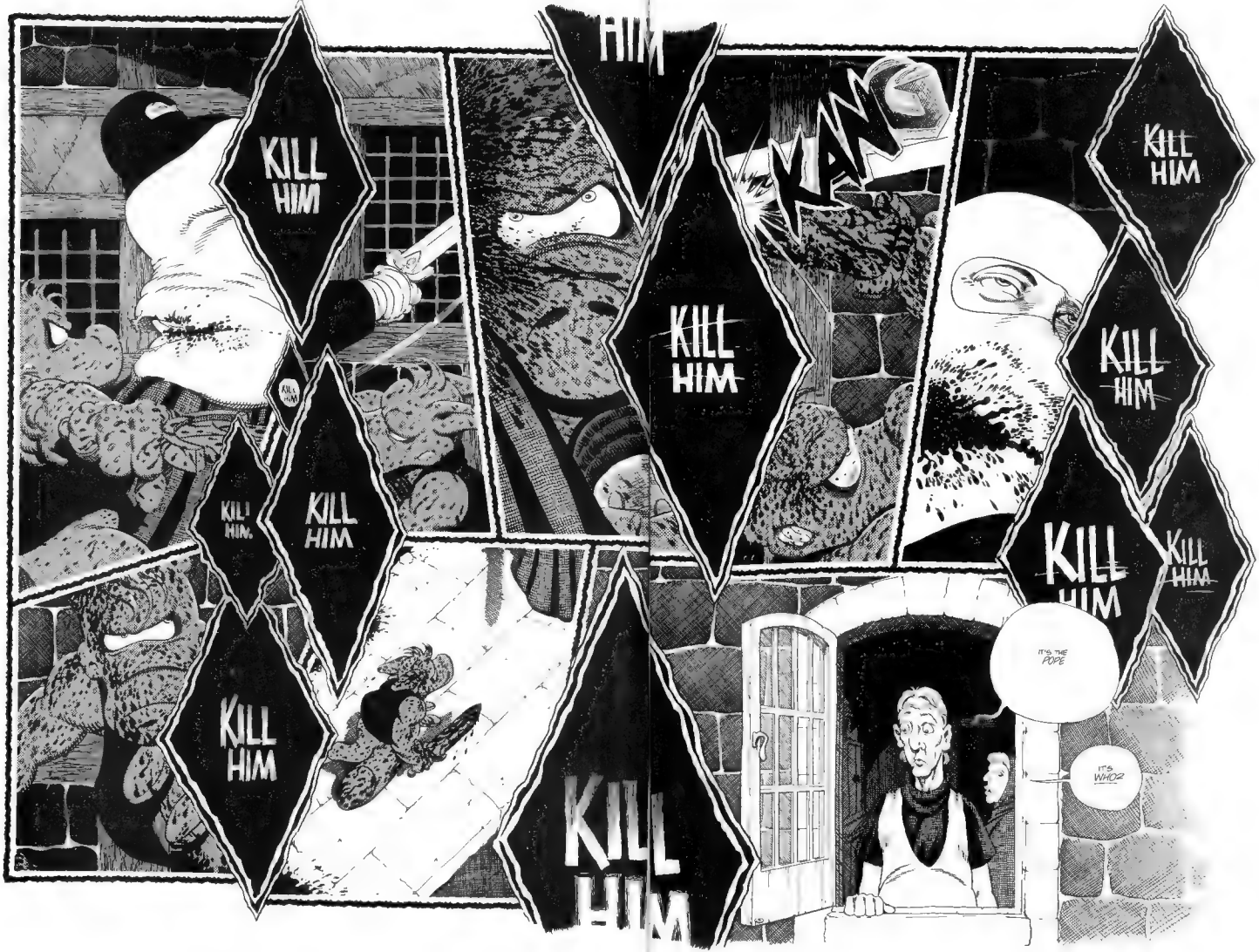
KILL HIM
KILL HIM
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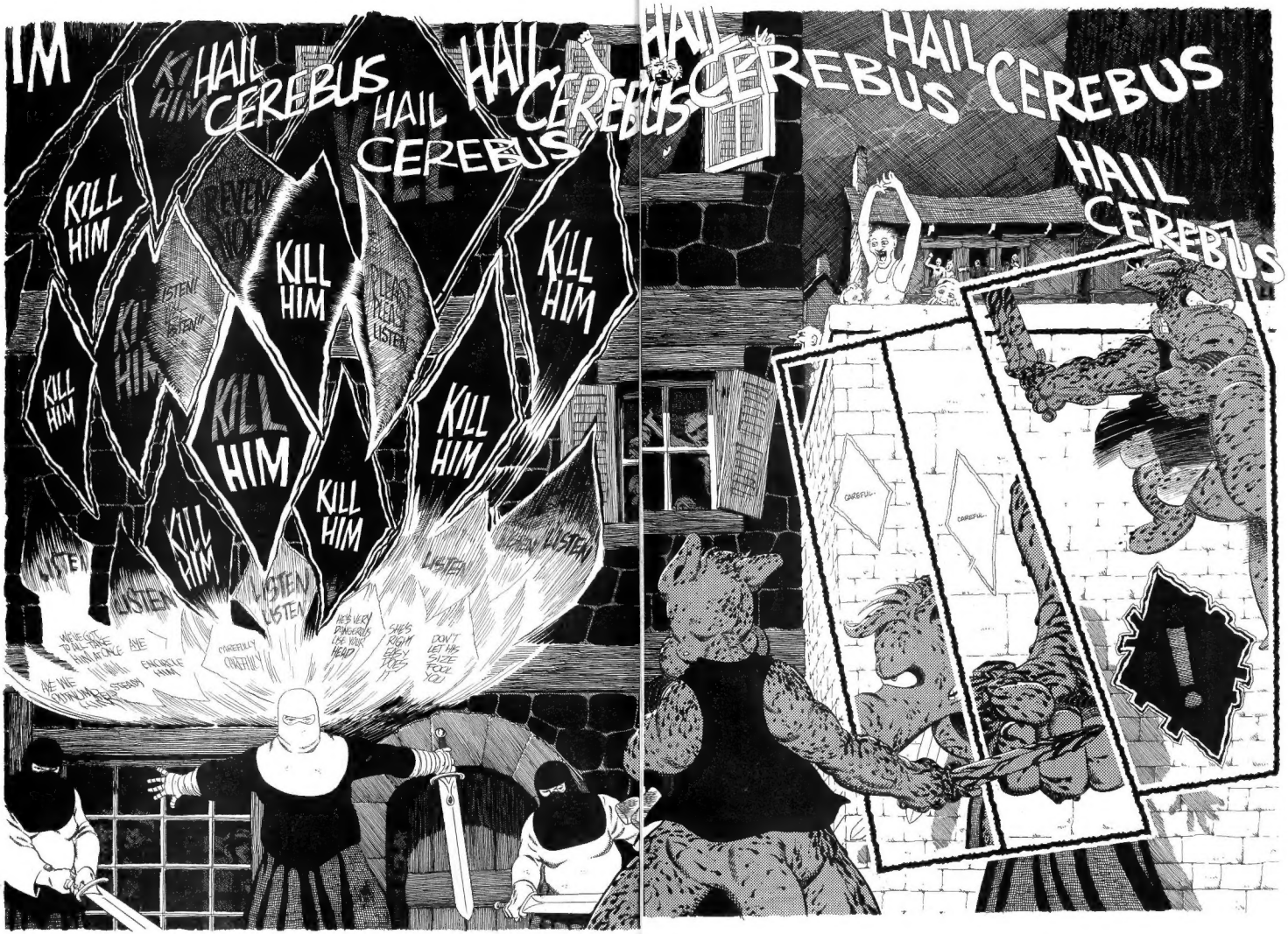
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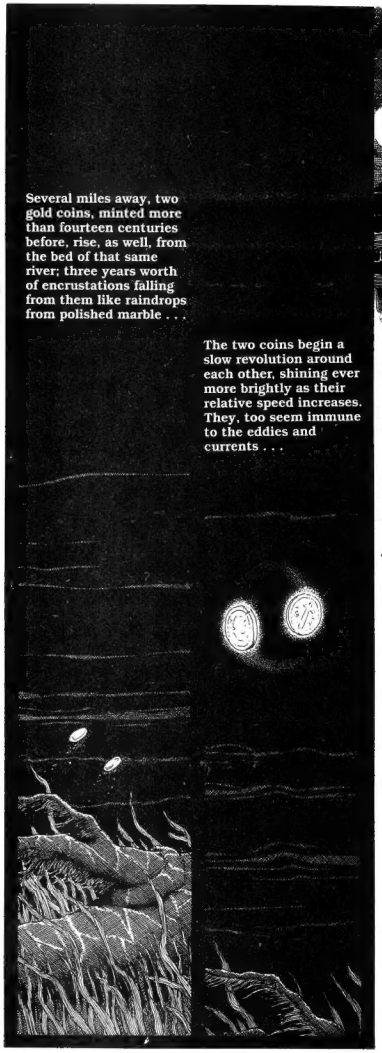
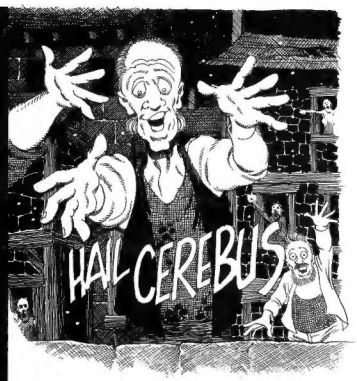
LISTEN
WE'VE GOT TO ALL TAKE HANDS ON ONE
AYE
ENCIRCLE HIM
WE'VE GOT HIM CAUGHT
STEADY
CAREFULLY CAREFULLY
HE'S VERY DANGEROUS LIKE YOUR HEAD
SHE'S RIGHT BEST TO FIT
DON'T LET HIS SIZE FOOL YOU
CAREFUL
CAREFUL
!

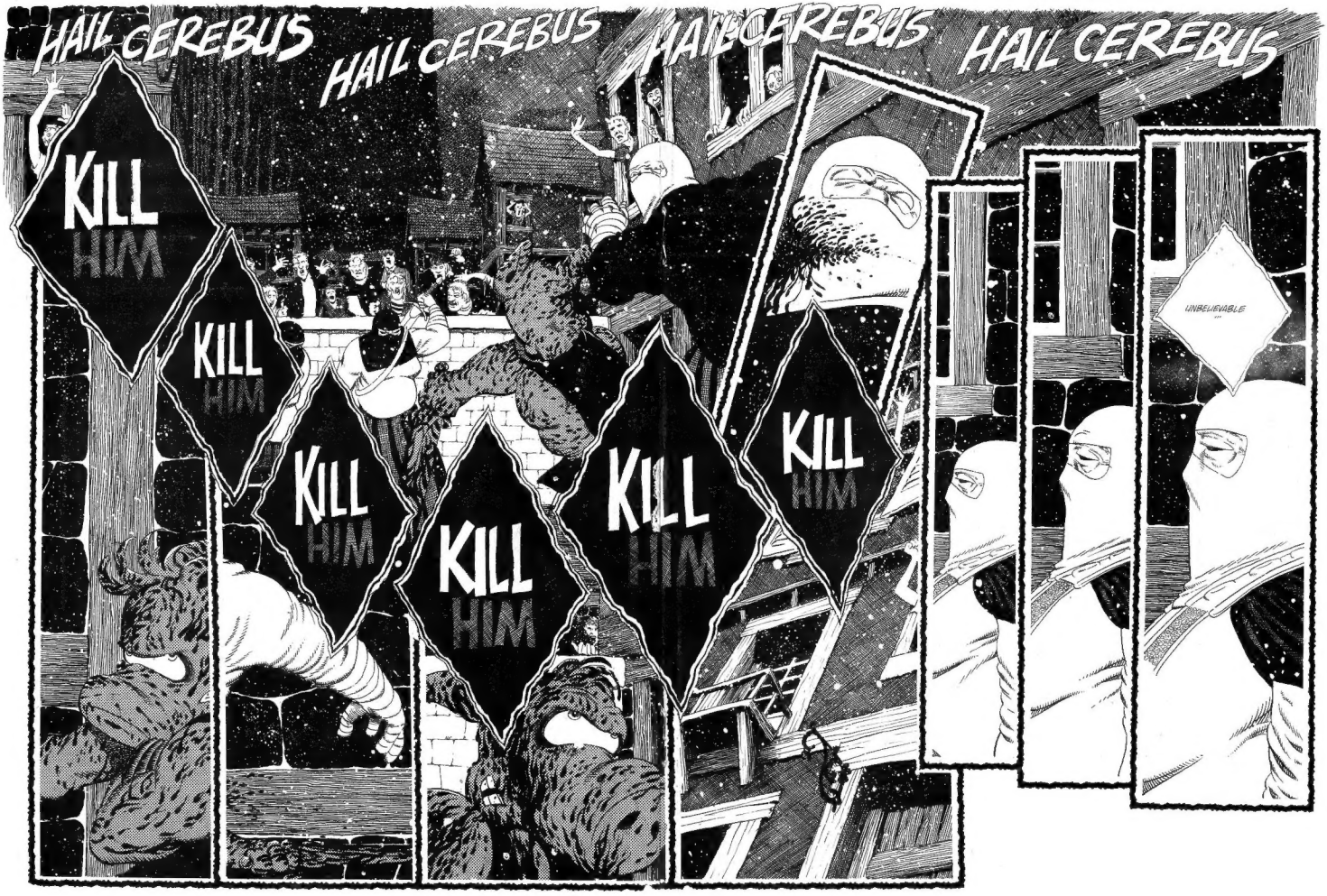
HAIL CEREBUS
KILL HIM
KILL HIM
KILL HIM
KILL HIM
HAIL CEREBUS
HAIL CEREBUS
HAIL CEREBUS
HAIL CEREBUS
GO HOME FAT, UGLY BITCHES
HAIL THE TRUE POPE
WHAT A MESS! WHAT AN ABSOLUTE MESS!
HOW MANY DEAD?
SIX--ER--SEVEN--ER EIGHT, MA'AM
WHAT A MESS
AND HIS BLESSED CHRIN NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT ALL THIS
SHE TOLD US NOT TO BOTHER HER WITH ANY MORE "CEREBUS SIGHTINGS"...
SHE...?

Several miles away, two gold coins, minted more than fourteen centuries before, rise, as well, from the bed of that same river; three years worth of encrustations falling from them like raindrops from polished marble . . .

The two coins begin a slow revolution around each other, shining ever more brightly as their relative speed increases. They, too seem immune to the eddies and currents . . .



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UNBELIEVABLE